

**Wigan Children’s Speech and Language Therapy Referral Guidelines**

(To be used in conjunction with **Speech and Language Therapy Referral Form**)

**PLEASE NOTE: Parental consent MUST be obtained in order to make a referral.**

**If you are a health professional, verbal consent is sufficient. If you are an education or other professional, written consent is essential.**

**How to use the guidelines for referral of children to the Speech and Language Therapy Service**

The guidelines for referral are presented on separate pages for each age group.

Find the child’s age and consider the child’s skills against the green and red descriptions. The Green row indicates what a typically developing child should be doing at this age. The Red row tells you if you should refer to the service. Describe some of this detail on the referral form to reduce the risk of rejection at triage. If you are unsure if you should refer, look at the Amber row and follow the relevant advice. If progress is limited after 3-6 months of input using the advice, you can consider these referral guidelines again.

Please provide as much detail about the impact of the child’s difficulties that you can as this helps us to provide the right input, at the right time and in the right place.

**NB**

**Under 2 years of age**: we are **not** accepting referrals for children under the age of 2 years currently. Please seek support from your Health Visitor and/or Early Years setting.

**Speaking anxiety:** if the child can speak well at home but does not speak or speaks only a little in other settings, please consider Selective Mutism. The child will benefit from assessment and advice.

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| **2 – 2 ½ years** |  | | | | |
|  | **Attention and Listening** | **Comprehension** | **Expressive Language** | **Speech sounds** | **Social skills/play** |
| **Refer if:** | Your child does not turn to their name / other sounds in house.  (NB: Must also have difficulties in **at least one other areas** of speech and language development, e.g. comprehension) | Unable to select familiar objects by name. Unable to follow everyday instructions in context. e.g. ‘where’s the car;’ ‘find your shoes.’ | Using less than 10 recognisable single words. Limited use of non-verbal communication e.g. use of gesture, signs, pointing. | Not using **any** consonant sounds e.g. b, m, w; only using vowels and /h/ sound. | Not using any simple pretend play e.g. feeding dolly, putting dinosaur to bed. Not tolerant of peers playing alongside. Limited use of voice, gesture, eye contact or facial expression to interact with others |
| **For Health Visitors /CNN /Nursery setting using Wellcomm** | Refer if the child scored red or amber on section EY2 of Wellcomm Tool. | | | | |
| **If between red/green descriptions, please follow strategies as shown in the links to support, but do not refer at this point.** | This section is in development. Please see our webpage for advice and links to useful resources.  <https://www.wwl.nhs.uk/childrens-salt-about-us> | This section is in development. Please see our webpage for advice and links to useful resources.  <https://www.wwl.nhs.uk/childrens-salt-about-us> | This section is in development. Please see our webpage for advice and links to useful resources.  <https://www.wwl.nhs.uk/childrens-salt-about-us> | This section is in development. Please see our webpage for advice and links to useful resources.  <https://www.wwl.nhs.uk/childrens-salt-about-us> | This section is in development. Please see our webpage for advice and links to useful resources.  <https://www.wwl.nhs.uk/childrens-salt-about-us> |
| **Appropriate skills: do not refer** | Able to attend to activity for a few minutes. Responds to name although this may not be consistent if involved in an activity. | Beginning to follow any two-word level instructions e.g. where’s mummy’s shoes, find teddy’s nose. Shows understanding of action words e.g. sleeping, jumping | Beginning to use simple 2-word combinations e.g. “my ball” or combines a gesture and word. Using around 50 words. May still babble and use jargon.  May have some repetitions of initial sounds e.g. b,b,b,ball, or whole words. | Parents have an idea of what they are saying although not always clear.  Will still use a limited range of sounds and may not use sounds such as k, g, f, s, sh, ch, l, and r. Likely to shorten longer or difficult words e.g. **poon** for spoon, **nana** for banana | Interested in others’ play & plays alongside. Imitates other’s actions/noises/facial expressions e.g. in play and nursery rhymes. |
| **For Health Visitors**  **/CNN /Nursery setting using Wellcomm** | Do not refer if child is scoring green in section EY3 or 4 of Wellcomm tool unless there are concerns regarding social communication or dysfluency or selective mutism. | | | | |
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| **2 ½ - 3 years** |  | | | | |
|  | **Attention and Listening** | **Comprehension** | **Expressive language** | **Speech sounds** | **Social skills/play** |
| **Refer if:** | Your child does not turn to their name / other sounds in house. Unable to concentrate on a task of their own choosing. It is very difficult for an adult to direct the child.  (NB: Must also have difficulties in **at least one other areas** of speech and language development, e.g. comprehension) | Unable to follow any two-word level instructions e.g. where’s mummy’s shoes, find teddy’s nose. Not understanding action words e.g. running, jumping | Unable to use simple word combinations e.g. “my ball,” “me want that”, “daddy wash”. Using single words only  **Dysfluency** (stammering) High level of parental anxiety and child showing awareness and struggle/tension e.g. accompanied by blinking, facial tension, or foot tapping. | Not able to use b, m, n, d, w sounds (even when copying from an adult) Unintelligible most of the time to familiar adults. | Not imitating actions of adults/peers e.g. action rhymes. Not interested in others’ play, always plays alone, and doesn’t tolerate peers playing alongside. Doesn’t show affection and concern for people who are special to them. |
| **For Health Visitors /CNN /Nursery setting using Wellcomm** | Refer if the child scored red or amber on section EY3 of Wellcomm Tool. | | | | |
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| **Appropriate skills: do not refer** | Able to attend to activity for a few minutes (4-6 minutes) and turn when their name is called.  Can sit for a familiar story and/or songs.  Can find it difficult staying involved in group activities. | Consistently following a range of two-word instructions e.g. make teddy jump, give mummy the book.  Beginning to show understanding of three-word instructions e.g. give teddy the key and the block.  Developing concepts such as ‘big/little’ | Using 2–4-word utterances.  Misses out little words e.g. is, on, the.  May have some repetitions of initial sounds e.g. b,b,b,ball, or whole words: “What, what, what Mummy doing?” | Will still use a limited range of sounds and may not use sounds such as k, g, f, s, sh, ch, l, and r. Likely to shorten longer or difficult words e.g. poon for spoon, nana for banana.  Familiar adults will usually know what they are saying but not always clear. | Shares and cooperates with others with some adult support. Starting to use pretend play e.g. using a pan for a hat. Initiates interaction with familiar adults and beginning to initiate interaction with peers |
| **For Health Visitors /CNN /Nursery setting using Wellcomm** | Do not refer if child is scoring green in section EY4 or 5 of Wellcomm tool unless there are concerns regarding social communication or dysfluency or selective mutism. | | | | |
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| **3;0 – 3;6 years** |  | | | | |
|  | **Attention and Listening** | **Comprehension** | **Expressive Language** | **Speech sounds** | **Social skills/play** |
| **Refer if:** | Unable to listen or pay attention even in 1:1 or small group settings with adult support.  (NB: Must also have difficulties in **at least one other areas** of speech and language development, e.g. comprehension) | Unable to follow 2 key word instructions e.g. ‘give the spoon to teddy’, ‘make the dinosaur sleep’. | Only using single words (not joining words together) Not using the right words, e.g. saying “dog” instead of “teddy.”  Dysfluency  Sometimes stutters/ stammers. | Not able to use p, b, m, n, t, d, w sounds.  Unintelligible most of the time to familiar adults. | Struggles to play cooperatively or take turns with adults or other children.  Repetitive features in play.  Overuse of learnt phrases or repeating lines from favourite films. |
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| **Appropriate skills: do not refer** | Able to listen to others. Can shift attention to a different task and back to previous task although they may need help. Can focus on an activity of their own choice for approximately 5 minutes. | Beginning to follow 3 key word instructions e.g. ‘put the cup under the table’. Beginning to understand concepts such as size e.g. big/little and position e.g. in/on/under. Understands some simple questions: who? where? what? | Using two-, three-, or four-word phrases e.g. my ball, me want that, daddy wash face. May be beginning to use more complex sentences. May not be clear. | Some errors with ‘k’, ‘g’, ‘f’, ‘v’, ‘s’, ‘z’, ‘l’, ‘r’. Many longer or more difficult words will be shortened e.g. ‘pider’ for ‘spider’, ‘nana’ for ‘banana’. Familiar adults can generally understand child. | They show sensitivity to others’ needs and feelings. Can form positive relationships with adults and other children. Keeps play going by responding to what others are saying or doing. Sequencing play and moving to small world toys. |
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| **3;6- 3;11 years** |  | | | | |
|  | **Attention and Listening** | **Comprehension** | **Expressive Language** | **Speech sounds** | **Social skills/play** |
| **Refer if:** | Unable to listen or pay attention even in 1:1 or small group settings with adult support.  (NB: Must also have difficulties in **at least one other areas** of speech and language development, e.g. comprehension) | Unable to follow any 3 key word instructions e.g. ‘put the cup under the table’. Does not show understanding of concepts such as size e.g. big/little and position e.g. in/on/under. | Not using a range of short sentences.  Dysfluency  Sometimes stutters/stammers. | Not able to use p, b, m, n, t, d, w sounds. Unintelligible most of the time to familiar adults | Struggles to play cooperatively or take turns with adults or other children. Repetitive features in play. Overuse of learnt phrases or repeating lines from favourite films. |
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| **Appropriate skills: do not refer** | Able to listen to others. Can shift attention to a different task and back to previous task. Can focus on an activity of their own choice for 5-10 minutes. | Starting to follow longer instructions e.g. ‘Put the cup and fork under the table.’ Can understand concepts such as size and position.  Understand simple questions: who? where? what? | Using three-, four-, or five-word phrases e.g. ‘where daddy gone’, ‘I want big ball’. May be beginning to use more complex sentences. | Some errors with ‘k’, ‘g’, ‘f’, ‘v’, ‘s’, ‘z’. Many longer or more difficult words will be shortened e.g. ‘pider’ for ‘spider’, ‘nana’ for ‘banana’. Familiar adults can generally understand child. | Shows sensitivity to others’ needs and feelings. Can form positive relationships with adults and other children. Showing more imagination in play and enjoying pretend play. |
| **4 y – 5 y** |  | | | | |
|  | **Attention and Listening** | **Comprehension** | **Expressive Language** | **Speech sounds** | **Social skills/play** |
| **Refer if:** | Unable to listen and do something at the same time e.g. colouring in and responding to an adult’s question  (NB: Must also have difficulties in **at least one other areas** of speech and language development, e.g. comprehension) | Difficulties understanding instructions containing three key words or understanding question words, e.g. who/where/ what? | Unable to explain what happened e.g. what happened at playtime. Unable to link thoughts and ideas using ‘and’ or ‘then’’.  Dysfluency  Stammering in connected speech | Using ‘b’ for ‘f’-e.g. ‘fish’ = ‘bish’ Using ‘d’ for ‘s’ e.g. ‘sun’ = ‘dun’ Using ‘t’ for ‘k’ and ‘d’ for ‘g’. e.g. girl = ‘dirl’. Adults generally can’t understand. | Unable to play with others- i.e. lack of interest in playing with other children / consistently chooses to play alone. Struggles to take turns in groups and only talks about topics of interest to them. |
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| **Appropriate skills: do not refer** | Beginning to be able to listen and do a chosen activity at the same time. Can concentrate for up to 15 minutes on a chosen activity. | Can follow instructions involving several ideas or actions e.g. Put teddy in the box and give me the plate.’ and answer questions of type who/what doing/what/where e.g. ‘Who fell over?’ | Able to describe an event from the recent past e.g. holiday, football game Can develop their own narratives and ideas by connecting ideas and events. May make some errors e.g. verb tenses. | Most people can understand the child, but there are still some errors with sounds e.g. ‘snake’ becomes ‘nake’, ‘cheese’ becomes ‘teese’ and ‘red’ becomes ‘wed’. | Confident to talk to other children when playing. Showing development of joke telling. Using language in different ways. |
| **5y – 7y (Key stage 1)** |  | | | | |
|  | **Attention and Listening** | **Comprehension** | **Expressive Language** | **Speech sounds** | **Social skills/play** |
| **Refer if:** | Struggles to sit and listen at carpet time and needs lots of reminders from adults to listen and attend to an activity. Easily distracted. Often needs instructions repeated. These difficulties should not be due to behaviour and compliance issues.  (NB: Must also have difficulties in **at least one other areas** of speech and language development, e.g. comprehension) | Not following classroom instructions (even when listening). Appears ‘lost’ in the classroom. Appears not to know the meanings of common words. Often needs instructions to be simplified or broken down into chunks. | Adult must work hard to understand what the child means and follow the sequence of thoughts. Unable to learn/retain new vocabulary. Sentences often containing empty language e.g. “that”, “there”. Unable to re-tell a sequence of events e.g. missing key facts or presenting them in the wrong order- ‘what happened at the weekend?’ Immature grammar e.g. using he for she. Short sentences consistently used expressively. Unable to answer basic why questions with a “because” answer.  Child stammers/stutters and parent or child is concerned. | Speech is unintelligible. Struggling to interact verbally with peers due to intelligibility issues. | Does not use language to make friends. Limited eye contact struggles with turn taking and or only talks about topics of interest to them. Unable to interpret emotions. Unable to understand and follow social rules e.g. queueing, joining in with games, interrupting, standing too close to people etc. Often misinterprets social situations e.g. think they are being bullied when someone has said “get out of my way”. |
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| **Appropriate skills: do not refer** | Able to take in information from listening, looking, and doing at the same time. Can concentrate on a classroom-based task as needed. | Able to follow classroom instructions independently. Can respond to a sequence of instructions of 3 or more items e.g. put the pencil in the box, go to the desk and bring me your book. | Able to fully engage in conversation, occasional errors e.g. “mouses”, “runned”, can talk about a range of past/future events. | Speech is generally easy to understand. Occasional errors with clusters e.g. sp/sk/tr, ‘th’, ‘l’ and ‘r’. At times speech may be unclear due to volume or rate however can modify this when prompted. Local dialectal variations are acceptable e.g. ‘fing’ for thing or ‘dis’ for this. | Is using language to make friends and extend social skills including the use of eye contact, turn taking, initiating interactions, staying on topic, and showing interest with others etc. e.g. arguing, bantering, and telling jokes. |

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| **7-11 y (key stage 2)** |  | | | | |
|  | **Attention and Listening** | **Comprehension** | **Expressive Language** | **Speech sounds** | **Social skills/play** |
| **Refer if:** | Struggles to sit and listen in whole class activities and needs lots of reminders from adults to listen and attend to an activity. Easily distracted. Often needs instructions repeated. These difficulties should not be due to behaviour and compliance issues.    (NB: Must also have difficulties in **at least one other areas** of speech and language development, e.g. comprehension) | Not following classroom instructions (even when listening). Appears ‘lost’ in the classroom. Appears not to know the meanings of common words. Often needs instructions to be simplified or broken down into chunks.  **OR**  The child’s level of comprehension is felt to be significantly lower than his general learning ability level. | Adult must work hard to figure out what the child means and follow the sequence of thoughts. Unable to learn/retain new vocabulary. Sentences often containing empty language e.g. “that”, “there”. Unable to re-tell a sequence of events e.g. missing key facts or presenting them in the wrong order. Immature grammar e.g. using he for she. Short sentences consistently used expressively. Unable to answer basic why questions with a “because” answer. Not able to use language to reason / justify/reason / predict e.g. answer ‘why not?’, ‘what if?’ etc.  **AND/OR**  Child stammers/stutters and parent or child is concerned.  **OR**  The child’s level of expressive language delay is felt to be significantly lower than their general learning ability. | Speech errors persist which interfere with child’s ability to be understood. Or are causing the child distress. | Does not use language to make friends. Limited eye contact struggles with turn taking and or only talks about topics of interest to them. Unable interpret emotions. Unable to understand and follow social rules e.g. queueing, joining in with games, interrupting, standing too close to people etc. Often misinterprets social situations e.g. think they are being bullied when someone has said “get out of my way”. |
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| **Appropriate skills: do not refer** | May not be able to sit still but are still listening and taking in information. | Able to follow classroom instructions independently. Can respond to a sequence of instructions of 3 or more items e.g. put the pencil in the box, go to the desk and bring me your book.  **OR**  Level of language delay is in line with the child’s level of general development/learning ability. | Able to fully engage in conversation. Can talk about a range of past/future events using a clear narrative structure with key events in the right order. Able to describe and retell everyday events e.g. what they did at the weekend Able to answer a range of questions including, ‘why/how’. Able to learn, retain and use new vocabulary.  **OR**  The child’s expressive ability is in-line with his general level of development/learning ability. | Speech is mostly intelligible. At times speech may be unclear due to volume or rate however can modify this when prompted. Local dialectal variations are acceptable e.g. ‘fing’ for thing or ‘dis’ for this. | Is using language to make friends and extend social skills including the use of eye contact, turn taking, initiating interactions, staying on topic, and showing interest with others etc. e.g. arguing, bantering, and telling jokes. Beginning to understand some nonliteral language or make inferences e.g. when a teacher says “the door is open” knowing to close the door. May have rigid ideas about friendships and social rules e.g. my best friend is only allowed to play with me.  **OR**  Social skills are in line with general level of development. |
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| **11 years +** |  | | | | |
|  | **Attention and Listening** | **Comprehension** | **Expressive language** | **Speech sounds** | **Social skills/play** |
| **Refer if:** | Cannot follow whole class instructions. Distracted by background noises. Often needs instructions repeated. These difficulties should not be due to behaviour and compliance issues.  (NB: Must also have difficulties in **at least one other areas** of speech and language development, e.g. comprehension) | Often needs instructions to be simplified or broken down into chunks. Often doesn’t understand key words within a sentence. Unable to understand/remember topic vocabulary. Unable to follow the thread of a social conversation. | Unable to name everyday items including words relating to school life e.g. vending machine. Unable to re-tell a sequence of events e.g. missing key facts or presenting them in the wrong order. Immature grammar e.g. using he for she. Short sentences consistently used expressively. Unable to answer why / how questions.  Child stammers/stutters and parent or child is concerned. | Speech errors persist which interfere with child’s ability to be understood. Or are causing the child distress. | Unable to understand non-literal language or make inferences e.g. when a teacher says “the door is open” not knowing to close the door. Unable to maintain a topic of conversation which is not of their choosing. Unable to understand how others are feeling and unable to read/use facial expressions. Unable to initiate conversations and make and maintain friendships. Unable to understand and follow social rules e.g. queueing, joining in with games, interrupting, standing too close to people etc. Often misinterprets social situations e.g. think they are being bullied when someone has said “get out of my way”. |
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| **Appropriate skills: do not refer** | Able to listen for long periods of time. Can tune out background noise and focus on the tasks. Can focus on more than one activity e.g. listening and writing at the same time. Can process new instructions while already engaged in a task. | Able to follow complex directions with several parts to it e.g. “take this message to the office and while you are there ask them when the fire drill is, then go straight to your next lesson.” Understands instructions which do not follow the order of the sentence (year 9 +) Able to follow the thread of a social conversation between a group of people. | Able to use complex or technical vocabulary. Able to use long and complex sentences using more complex joining words e.g. ‘meanwhile’. Can formulate questions in everyday situations. All language should be grammatically correct e.g. using irregular past tense (Local dialectal variations are acceptable) Able to describe and retell everyday events and plots of books/films. Able to answer a range of questions involving complex reasoning e.g. what if, how do you know, why not etc. | Speech is mostly intelligible. At times speech may be unclear due to volume or rate however can modify this when prompted. Local dialectal variations are acceptable e.g. ‘fing’ for thing or ‘dis’ for this. | Able to interact appropriately with a range of people. Able to modify interaction style to their communication partner. Can interpret and understand social situations appropriately. Able to make and maintain friendships. |